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BATMAN™ / THE MAXX™

ARKHAM DREAMS

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I SIT MOTIONLESS ON THIS ROTTING POG TREE STUMP.

POISED. SWEATY. TIRED YET WIRED.

THE SMELL OF ANTICIPATION HANGS IN THE STEAMY OUTBACK AIR. DANGER LURKS. BUT I AM NOT AFRAID...

...FOR I AM...

THE MAXX

HOWEVER, ON THIS DAY...

...I AM NOT ALONE.

BESIDE ME, ALSO MOTIONLESS, YET POISED TO POUNCE, IS THE DEADLY CANIS LUPUS, OR WUMPUS WOOF.

DESPITE ITS CUTE, FURRY FACE, A DEADLY KILLER. LIKE CERTAIN DINOSAURS, IT ONLY CAN SPOT ITS PREY ONCE THE PREY MOVES!

THUS, DESPITE THE VILLAINOUS WUMPUS WOOF CROUCHED RIGHT BESIDE ME, AS LONG AS I REMAIN QUIET AND MOTIONLESS...

...I AM INVISIBLE.

BUT... WE TWO... ARE NO LONGER ALONE.

I DETECT THE FAINT WHIFF OF... WHAT IS IT?

NOT THE JUNGLE QUEEN. IT'S... SOMEONE, OR SOME THING ELSE...

IT'S ME, MAXX! DR. DISPARU. CAN YOU HEAR ME?

WHERE ARE WE JUST NOW?

DUNNO. THE OUTBACK, I THINK.

SO, IS THAT YOUR WAY OF AVOIDING THE ELEPHANT IN THE LIVING ROOM?

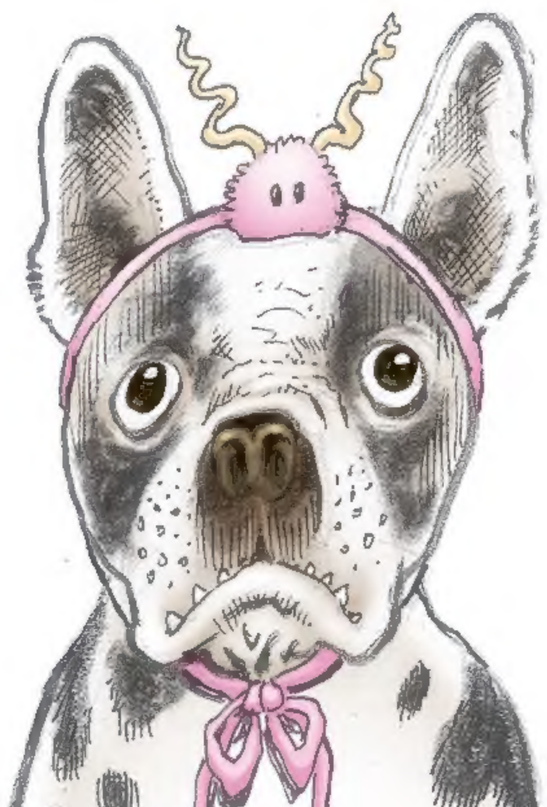
NO, I THINK IT WAS A WUMPUS WOOF.

SHOULD THAT BE CAT? NEVER MIND. BY ELEPHANT, I MEAN THE FACT YOU'VE BEEN AVOIDING ME, OR WORSE—EVEN MORE CONFUSED THAN USUAL, WHICH IS SAYING A LOT, GIVEN HOW CONFUSED YOU USUALLY ARE.

DAMN IT, MAXX, YOU HAD ME SCARED OUT OF MY HEAD. I'VE LOOKED ***EVERYWHERE*** FOR YOU, YOU BIG DUMMY!

YEAH. I MISSED YOU TOO.

UH... IS IT JUST ME, OR IS THAT A SMALL DOG SITTING IN YOUR LIVING ROOM?



JUST DOG-SITTING FOR A NEIGHBOR OVER THE WEEKEND.

OH. THOUGHT I WAS SEEING THINGS AGAIN.

JULIE, ARE YOU MAD AT ME?

NOPE. JUST SCARED, WHICH CREATES VULNERABILITY, WHICH—

—MAKES YOU ANGRY?

SIGH NOT ANGRY, JUST... WORRIED.

WHAT'S ITS NAME?

DOESN'T HAVE ONE YET.

WHAT'S THAT ON ITS HEAD?

I DUNNO. LEFTOVER FROM HALLOWEEN... MAYBE IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE A COSTUME?

HMM. MAYBE THIS IS AS CLOSE AS WE'LL EVER COME TO HAVING A KID.

OKAY, NOW YOU'RE WEIRDING ME OUT.

IT'S A DOG, MAXX, AND BESIDES, I ALREADY HAVE A KID, REMEMBER?

HI, DOGGIE. DOES HE BITE?

SNORT

DON'T WORRY, I THINK YOU CAN TAKE HIM.

GOOD GRIEF, MAXX, HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN...?

I COULDN'T FIND YOUR OLD ADDRESS.

YET HERE WE ARE, IN THE SAME OLD BUILDING.

SPEAKING OF ADDRESSES, YOU NEVER TOLD ME YOU WERE GONNA CHANGE ALLEYS.

MY OLD CARDBOARD BOX'S ROOF GOT WATER DAMAGE.

NEVERTHELESS, IF YOU *DO* DISAPPEAR AGAIN, THIS IS HOW WE'LL KEEP TABS ON EACH OTHER.

YIKES, NOT THOSE THINGS, THEY TURN FOLKS INTO ZOMBIES, ***THUMB PEOPLE!***

IN THE OUTBACK THOSE "PHONES" ARE ACTUALLY LEAVES FROM DYING POG TREES. POISONOUS FIREFLIES ARE DRAWN TO THE BACK OF THE LEAVES, MAKING THEM GLOW.

THAT'S THE OUTBACK. IN THIS WORLD, THESE "LEAVES" ARE A LIFELINE, ESPECIALLY FOR THE HOMELESS, AND THAT MEANS YOU, BUNKY.

WOW, LOOKIE, THEY HAVE ALL SORTS OF STUFF HERE...

SEE? JUST TYPE YOUR TWO FAVORITE THINGS INTO THE SEARCH BAR.

MY FINGERS ARE TOO BIG.

USE YOUR CLAW, SILLY.

OMG... THEY EVEN HAVE A GAME FOR THIS?? *GEE*, JULIE... THIS IS KIND OF ADDICTIVE.

CLICK

TOAST VS PEZ - THE GAME

SEE, NOT ALL TECHNOLOGY... OR, *UH*, "POG LEAVES"... ARE EVIL.

NO, JULIE, IT'S TOO LATE, THIS SMALL LITTLE OUTBACK LEAF HAS ME SPELLBOUND. IT'S TOO LATE, I'VE BECOME ADDICTED TO FIREFLY LIGHT... BECOME ONE OF THE... THUMB PEOPLE.

NO, YOU'VE HELPED MAKE BOTH OUR LIVES A LOT EASIER. GPS SHOULD HELP IF WE LOSE TOUCH AGAIN, AND MY NUMBER'S HERE. I PROMISE I'LL NEVER LEAVE YOU AGAIN, MAXX.

I MISSED YOU.

AWW... THAT'S SWEET. NOW, SHOW ME, RIGHT NOW, HOW TO CALL ME AGAIN IF YOU GET CONFUSED, 'KAY?

grrr.

OKAY, HOW DID I WIND UP BACK HERE AGAIN?

BUT WAIT—A THIRD CREATURE IS SUDDENLY AMONG US.

HE, TOO, IS SIZING US UP.

MAXX! I CAN HEAR YOU, YOU'RE THINKING OUT LOUD AGAIN.

DAMN!

...SO CAN THAT CREATURE STANDING NEXT TO YOU.

WHAT IS THAT THING, BY THE WAY?

THAT IS A WUMPUS WOOF.

IS IT DANGEROUS?

VERY. ESPECIALLY THE HORNS. BUT IT ONLY ATTACKS US IF WE MOVE.

CAN IT HEAR US TALKING?

...I DUNNO. BUT JUST STAY PERFECTLY STILL... SO FAR, SO GOOD.

UH... I JUST REALIZED SOMETHING...

WHAT?

OUR LIPS ARE MOVING.

CRAP.

MAXX, WHAT DID YOU SAY?

DOESN'T MATTER, IT'S TOO LATE NOW.

I LIVE BETWEEN TWO WORLDS, TWO DIFFERENT MEANINGS. THEN I HAD TO SCREW IT UP BY...

BUT WAIT—MY LIPS ARE HIDDEN, BUT SADLY, NOT THE BATMAN'S. IT'S TOO LATE.

I CAN FEEL THE WUMPUS WOOF IS READY TO POUNCE!

GGGRRRRRR

GGGRRRRRRR

MUST PROTECT JUNGLE QUEEN'S DAMAGED OUTBACK!

CRAP, WHERE DID THE BATMAN GO?

IT'S TOO LATE NOW—I CAN FEEL THE WOOF'S RAZOR-SHARP FANGS DIGGING INTO MY TENDER FLESH—POWER DRAINING FROM MY LIMBS—MAY BLACK OUT NOW—UNLESS I CAN JUST...

CHOMP

MAXX... YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?

...IT WILL STOP AT NOTHING TO KILL THE OUTBACK'S PRECIOUS JUNGLE QUEEN...

GRRRR GGGRRR.

IT'S JUST A FIVE-POUND DOG, MAXX—

—AND *YOU*–*YOU* NAUGHTY LITTLE POOCH... DON'T BE A BULLY.

HONESTLY— CAN'T YOU TWO BOTH JUST PLAY NICE? OTHERWISE, YOU'LL BOTH BE IN THE DOGHOUSE!

IT IS DONE. THANKS TO THE SWIFT INTERVENTION BY THE GREAT JUNGLE QUEEN, I WAS able TO DEFEAT THE SAVAGE WUMPUS CAT...

I MEAN, WOOF. WUMPUS WOOF.

WHILE IT WORKED, THE BROKEN HORNS OF THE WUMPUS WOOF MAY HAVE LEFT A PSYCHIC TRAIL IN THE OUTBACK, ONE LEADING BACK HERE TO THE OTHER WORLD.

THIS JUNGLE QUEEN'S REAL-WORLD COUNTERPART IS RIGHT HERE TOO... BUT I CAN'T HEAR WHAT SHE'S SAYING.

BATMAN! YOU'VE RETURNED!

I WAS ALWAYS HERE, MAXX. I SEE YOU'VE CONQUERED THE WOLFEN BEAST. WHAT'S THAT IN YOUR HAND?

IT'S A POG LEAF. FIREFLIES SWARM TO THE BACK, EMITTING A WARM LIGHT.

INTERESTING.

OH, GREAT— WHAT DID YOU DO THAT FOR?

CRACK

OOPS. TAPPED THE SCREEN TOO HARD.

WHY DID YOU STAB THE LEAF?

NEVER MIND...

THINGS CHANGE IN BETWEEN THE WORLDS. EACH HAS ITS OWN RULES.

GLOWING LEAVES BECOME METAL BOXES OF LIGHT.

WE'RE WASTING TIME. WE NEED TO STOP ARKHAM'S VILLAINS FROM FURTHER POLLUTING THE OUTBACK.

BUT FIRST, WE NEED TO RULE OUT THAT IT'S YOUR OUTBACK.

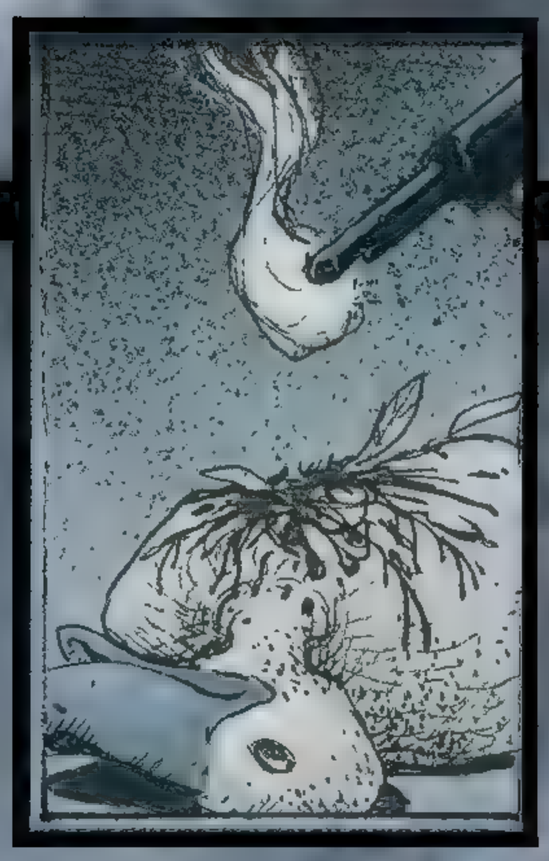
JUST FOLLOW THAT GROWING WORMHOLE ON THE HORIZON.

BATMAN'S OUTBACK

"BUT, MAXX, I'M NOT SURE I EVEN HAVE AN OUTBACK.

"EVERYONE HAS AN OUTBACK."

"I CAN'T SHARE IT WITH YOU, MAXX. TOO PAINFUL. PRIVATE. MY SUBCONSCIOUS IS TOO DARK—"



"DON'T WORRY, I CAN'T SEE INTO IT. YOU HAVE TO GO THROUGH IT ALONE.

"YOUR OUTBACK ISN'T JUST A SUBCONSCIOUS JUNK HEAP...

"...IT'S A PLACE OF ESCAPE.

HE'S GONE NOW. I'M ALONE.

EVERYTHING'S DISTORTED HERE. A FEW BRIEF IMAGES FROM CHILDHOOD. WHERE AM I NOW? THERE'S A LITTLE GIRL, SOMEWHAT FAMILIAR.

HELLO, THERE, DO I KNOW YOU?

MAYBE. MY NAME IS ALICE. I THINK I MAY BE LOST. DID YOU FALL DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE TOO?

POSSIBLY. I'M LOOKING FOR A PLACE CALLED... THE OUTBACK.

WHAT'S AN OUTBACK?

I THINK IT'S SOMEPLACE WHERE YOU GO TO ESCAPE... OR TO MAKE SENSE OF THINGS.

IT'S NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO MAKE SENSE OF THIS DOWN HERE, ISN'T IT? I CHASED A TALKING RABBIT WITH A STOPWATCH DOWN THIS HOLE, BUT LOOK WHERE IT GOT ME.

I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN.

IT'S AWFULLY DARK DOWN HERE, TOO, AND YOU LOOK AS LOST AS I AM. MAYBE YOU'VE FORGOTTEN WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A LITTLE BOY AGAIN?

MAYBE IT'S BETTER... NOT TO REMEMBER.

THERE'S A LOT OF WAYS TO BE LOST. I REMEMBER A BOY NAMED BRUCE WHO CARRIED A GREAT PAIN DEEP INSIDE OF HIM. SO DEEP WAS HIS GRIEF THAT HE FOUND A SPIRIT ANIMAL TO PROTECT HIMSELF AND THOSE HE LOVED.

A... BAT, PERHAPS?

YES, HOW DID YOU KNOW?

LUCKY GUESS. SO WHAT DID THIS BOY DO?

WHO CAN SAY? HE VOWED TO MAKE SURE OTHERS WOULD NEVER FEEL THE LOSS HE HAD. TROUBLE WAS HE CREATED A CAVE AROUND HIS HEART TO STAY SAFE AND TO PROTECT HIMSELF.

MAYBE THAT'S A GOOD THING. OR MAYBE HE FELT LIKE HE DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE.

THERE'S ALWAYS A CHOICE.

BUT AT WHAT COST?

I REMEMBER ANOTHER WOMAN, SABINE—SHE DIDN'T KNOW BRUCE DIRECTLY, BUT SHE HAD A JOB NO-ONE WANTED, TAKING CARE OF PEOPLE AT A MENTAL INSTITUTION FOR CRIMINALS, SOME PLACE CALLED ARKHAM.

SHE BUILT A WALL AROUND HER HEART TOO; THE "CAVE" SHE LIVED IN WAS... TO PROTECT HER LITTLE BOY. SHE CONVINCED HERSELF THAT WORKING IN SUCH A HELLISH JOB WAS THE PRICE TO PAY TO PROTECT THOSE SHE LOVED.

MAYBE IT WAS. LOTS OF PEOPLE WORK HORRIBLE JOBS FOR THE GREATER GOOD.

BUT SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY, SHE LOST SOMETHING. HER MOTIVES WERE PURE, BUT WAS HER ARKHAM SALARY WORTH THE WALLS SHE BUILT AROUND HER OWN HEART?

SHE TRIED TO QUIT, BUT SHE CRUMPLED UP HER RESIGNATION LETTER.

SHE LOST FAITH IN HERSELF... STOPPED BELIEVING THAT THERE WAS ALWAYS A CHOICE.

THE THIRD PERSON WAS NAMED CALLIE. SHE WAS A BLIND GIRL, ONE WHO HELPED YOU SOLVE A CRIME ONCE, DO YOU REMEMBER?

YES, I REMEMBER.

CALLIE FELT A CONNECTION WITH YOU, ONE SHE TRIED TO HIDE BECAUSE SHE WAS AFRAID YOU MAY NOT RETURN HER AFFECTIONS...

YES, I SENSED THAT ABOUT HER. I TRIED TO KEEP MY DISTANCE FOR THAT VERY REASON, FOCUS ON THE CASE, COLLECT CLUES AND MAKE SENSE OF THE MYSTERY.

WHAT DO ALL THESE STRANGERS HAVE IN COMMON?

SAME AS ME, THEY HIDE THEIR INNER MOST FEARS DEEP WITHIN THEMSELVES.

Callie

Sabine

Bruce

Alice

SO, WE'RE HERE NOW.

WHERE'S ALICE?

YOU'RE HOME. THIS IS YOUR OUTBACK.

BUT IT'S PITCH BLACK. I CAN'T SEE A THING.

YES, BUT YOUR SPIRIT ANIMAL CAN.

SO, THIS IS MY OUTBACK, THEN. ALWAYS NIGHT. ALWAYS DARK. ALWAYS COLD. ALL JUST BECAUSE... OF SOME HORRIBLE TRAUMA... TOTALLY OUT OF MY CONTROL?

MAYBE YOU COULDN'T CONTROL IT AS A YOUNG BOY, BUT EVEN AS A GROWN MAN, YOU, SABINE, CALLIE—ALL IF US SHARE ONE MORE THING IN COMMON.

WHAT?

NO ONE IS ALONE.

TO BE CONTINUED!

COVER A BY SAM KIETH | COLORS BY RONDA PATTISON

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RETAILER INCENTIVE COVER BY GABRRIEL RODRIGUEZ | COLORS BY JAY FOTOS

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